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BUREAU DE L'ÉDUCATION FRANÇAISE

FRENCH IMMERSION
Reading and Writing Assessment of French as a Second Language
Grade 6
1988

Summary Report

OCTOBER 1990

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FOREWORD

In May 1988, grade six students in French Immersion schools participated in the provincial Reading and Writing Assessment of French as a Second Language. This assessment included three components: (1) two tests dealing with the objectives of the curriculum; (2) a survey of grade six students; (3) a survey of grade six teachers.

The provincial French Immersion Reading and Writing Assessment of French as a Second Language was an initiative of the Bureau de l'éducation française. Educational Support Services was responsible for the project. However, teachers and curriculum consultants were involved throughout the evaluation process.

A Preliminary Report was published in October 1988. It contained the students' results for the reading and writing assessment. It did not contain an analysis or interpretation of the data.

A Final Report was also published in the fall of 1990. This document provides a detailed presentation of the results for the three components along with recommendations made on the basis of the data and the interpretation thereof. A copy of this report was sent to all school divisions and schools involved.

This Summary Report provides a general review of the principle elements of the project. It was sent to school divisions, schools and resource teachers as well as grade six French teachers. Anyone wishing to do a more in-depth study is encouraged to consult the Final Report which was sent either to their school or school division.

Guy L. Roy
Assistant Deputy Minister

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We would like to extend sincere thanks to all those who participated in any way in the French Immersion Reading and Writing Assessment of French as a Second Language.

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of Mr. Henri GRIMARD, Director of Educational Support Services with the Bureau de l'éducation française, as well as the contribution of the members of the Technical Committee (instrument development and data interpretation):

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BACKGROUND

In the fall of 1986, the Bureau de l'éducation française took the necessary steps to conduct a Reading and Writing Assessment of French as a Second Language at the grade 6 level in immersion schools.

Goals

The goals of this provincial assessment project of French as a Second Language were to:

- provide the Department of Education and Training, the public and educators with information on the extent to which the objectives of the "FRANÇAIS IMMERSION 6e année, document provisoire 1985", curriculum have been met;
- gather data to improve the curriculum;
- promote or sustain an interest in a quality language of communication among students, parents, educators and school administrators;
- help teachers improve their student evaluation skills;
- inform school divisions, upon request, of the extent to which curriculum objectives have been met in their schools.

Criterion-referenced testing

In order to describe the students' performance as relating to the objectives of the curriculum, criterion-referenced testing was chosen over norm-referenced testing.

Development and pilot testing

The tests were developed by a committee of professionals from the field of education, appointed by the Bureau de l'éducation française. The tests were then validated in five immersion schools in the spring of 1987.

Administration and correction

In May 1988, the tests and surveys were administered at the provincial level. All grade 6 students in the province in early and middle immersion (point of entry - grade 4) participated in the assessment. The tests were administered by grade 6 French teachers.

The tests were marked by individuals hired and trained by the Department.

Interpretation of results

The Bureau de l'éducation française established a committee to study and interpret the test data. This Summary Report provides a synthesis of this interpretation as well as all the recommendations made by the committee.

Although the interpretation of results by the committee is valid for the students in the province in general, it cannot be applied accurately to each individual class throughout the province. The committee believes that individual teachers are the experts for their classrooms, and are consequently in the best position to determine the results the group should achieve.

READING ASSESSMENT

MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT

TEST DESCRIPTION

For the written comprehension test, students were required to read ten texts which included the following types of messages:

- informative,
- expressive,
- poetic,
- persuasive.

The students were also required to answer questions some of which were short-answer, and some of which were multiple choice/true-false.

The texts or questions began with a brief introduction which served to clarify the purpose of the communication.

Lastly, following the test, the students were asked to answer a survey on their reading habits.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT

The written comprehension test was developed by following a number of steps in order to ensure its validity(1) and reliability(2).

Objectives and evaluation context

The written comprehension test was to measure the extent to which the curriculum objectives of the FRANÇAIS IMMERSION, 6e année, document provisoire 1985, had been met. **This curriculum includes a general objective and 48 specific objectives related to reading comprehension**(3). It was, therefore, impossible to evaluate all aspects of reading comprehension as described in the curriculum. It was necessary to choose the objectives which best represented the orientation advocated in the curriculum.

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1 Validity: characteristic of an instrument which accurately measures everything it claims to measure, and no more. Definition taken from Government of Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, Lexique, no. 2 of Éléments de docimologie (Québec: Direction générale du développement pédagogique, 1984), p. 35.

2 Reliability: characteristic of a measurement instrument the results of which are stable for the same subjects observed under identical conditions at different times. (Definition taken from Lexique, p. 14).

3 Manitoba. Department of Education and Training, Programme d'études, FRANÇAIS IMMERSION, 6e, document provisoire, (Winnipeg: Bureau de l'éducation française, 1985), p. 81.

The committee selected a total of ten objectives:

- five objectives taken from the section entitled: "Développer la compréhension des messages écrits";
- four objectives taken from the section entitled: "Développer l'interprétation des messages écrits";
- one objective taken from the section entitled: "Développer les habiletés de consultation".

Development and revision of the items

Once the objectives and texts were chosen, the committee developed items on the basis of Bloom's taxonomy[1]. The committee then checked the texts and items in order to:

- ensure that the items corresponded with the objective;
- ensure the technical quality of the items.

Pilot testing

In the spring of 1987, the test was validated in five immersion schools.

Reliability

The reliability of the test was calculated on the basis of the Diederich formula[2], which produced a coefficient of 0.87; the degree of reliability of the test is, therefore, very high.

EVALUATED OBJECTIVES

The 54 items included in the written comprehension test are divided into 10 sub-tests, each of which corresponds to an objective of the Programme d'études, FRANÇAIS IMMERSION, 6 année, document provisoire, 1985.

SUB-TESTS (objectives)	Item numbers indicated by type of message			
	POETIC	EXPRESSIVE	INFORMATIVE	PERSUASIVE
I. finding the meaning of new words in context	45, 51	22	14, 15, 16, 42, 43	33, 35
II. listing the sequence of events	46, 53			5
III. responding to questions when the answer is explicit		21, 23	17	2, 3, 4
IV. identifying the information in a text which supports or refutes a statement	52		38, 39, 40, 41	
V. identifying the main idea of a text	29		18, 44	1
VI. expressing explicitly what is said implicitly	47, 54	19		36
VII. finding cause and effect relationships	31, 32, 49, 50			
VIII. drawing conclusions and deducing	30, 48	20, 24		34, 37
IX. identifying reactions of different characters		25, 26, 27, 28		
X. developing table reading skills				6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

[1] Marc André Nadeau: L'évaluation des programmes d'études (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1981), pp. 233-297.

[2] The Diederich formula is a modification of Kuder-Richardson's formula 21. Dominique Morissette, La Mesure et l'évaluation en enseignement (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1984), p. 61 and 62.

RESULTS OF WRITTEN COMPREHENSION TEST

This section includes:

- the provincial results
- the interpretation of results for each sub-test;
  - the procedure followed to interpret the results;
  - the synthesis of the interpretation of results.

In all cases, the results are group results for all students in immersion schools; 1189 students wrote the written comprehension test.

PROVINCIAL RESULTS

Average performance per sub-test and for the written comprehension test as a whole

The number of students used to calculate the provincial average was 1189.

SUB-TESTS	Number of items per objective	Mean Raw Score	Percentage (%)
TEST TOTAL	54	41.51	76.88
I. finding the meaning of new words in context	10	7.82	78.22
II. listing the sequence of events	3	2.06	68.57
III. responding to questions when the answer is explicit	6	5.07	84.58
IV. identifying the information in a text which supports or refutes a statement	5	3.75	74.99
V. identifying the main idea of a text	4	3.07	76.79
VI. expressing explicitly what is said implicitly	4	2.42	60.47
VII. finding cause and effect relationships	4	3.34	83.60
VIII. drawing conclusions and deducing	6	3.14	52.33
IX. identifying reactions of different characters	4	3.46	86.59
X. developing table reading skills	8	7.37	92.18

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

PROCEDURE FOLLOWED TO INTERPRET RESULTS

The Technical Committee indicated its expectations for each of the ten sub-tests:

ACCEPTABLE level of performance: The committee determined the minimum percentage of students in the province who would have to answer correctly in order to consider the results satisfactory. If the percentage of students who answered correctly was below the minimum level, the results would be considered unsatisfactory.

DESIRABLE level of performance: The committee determined the percentage of students which it hoped would answer correctly. In other words, it aimed for the ideal. According to the committee, the results would be considered excellent if they achieved or surpassed this level.

After having identified its expectations, the committee compared them to the actual results. The committee then used the interpretation scale below, in order to determine their degree of satisfaction with the results.

SYNTHESIS OF THE INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

THE SCALE USED TO INTERPRET RESULTS		SUB-TESTS
5 EXCELLENT COMMAND	The actual results are at or above DESIRABLE level. The committee is very satisfied.	IX. identifying reactions of different characters X. developing table reading skills
4 VERY GOOD COMMAND	The actual results are slightly above acceptable level, but below desirable level. The committee is satisfied.	I. finding the meaning of new words in context VII. finding cause and effect relationships
3 GOOD COMMAND	The actual results are ACCEPTABLE. The committee is satisfied.	II. listing the sequence of events III. responding to questions when the answer is explicit V. identifying the main idea of a text VI. expressing explicitly what is said implicitly
2 FAIR COMMAND	The actual results are slightly below the acceptable level, although not entirely unacceptable. The committee is not satisfied.	IV. identifying in a text the information which supports or refutes a statement
1 INSUFFICIENT COMMAND	The actual results are far below the acceptable level. The committee is not satisfied.	VIII. drawing conclusions and deducing

The interpretation of results led to recommendations which can be found on page 6.

RESULTS OF SURVEY COMPLETED BY STUDENTS FOLLOWING THE WRITTEN COMPREHENSION TEST

The data from the survey completed by the students following the written comprehension test indicates that the majority of grade six students:

- found the test easy;
- speak English at home;
- like reading in French somewhat;
- think it is easy to read in French;
- read in French at least once a month outside of class hours;
- especially like reading comics and short stories.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The reading assessment included two components: one test and one survey. The purpose of the test was to measure the extent to which the curriculum objectives were being met, while the purpose of the survey was to provide some information on the students who wrote the test.

The test results were published in October 1988 in the Preliminary Report, which did not contain an analysis or interpretation of the data. Even before the publication of the Preliminary Report, a committee was established to interpret the results. This committee, which met throughout the 1988-89 school year, adopted a procedure which enabled them to determine their degree of satisfaction with each of the ten objectives evaluated in the test. The reader is encouraged to refer to the section entitled Interpretation of Results in order to obtain more information on the procedure which was followed.

The work of the committee led to the following conclusions.

The students have an excellent command of the following objectives:

- identifying reactions of different characters;
- developing table reading skills.

In addition, the students also have a very good command of the following objectives:

- finding cause and effect relationships;
- finding the meaning of new words in context.

They have a good command of the following objectives:

- listing the sequence of events;
- responding to questions when the answer is explicit;
- identifying the main idea of a text;
- expressing explicitly what is said implicitly.

However, the students have only a fair command of the following objective:

- identifying the information in a text which supports or refutes a statement.

And the students have an insufficient command of the following objective:

- drawing conclusions and deducing.

In general, **the students demonstrated a good command of the objectives** measured by the written comprehension test. The committee is satisfied with the results obtained for eight of the ten evaluated objectives. The students, as well as all those who helped them achieve these objectives, deserve congratulations.

Although the reading assessment provides information, it also raises a number of questions, especially with regard to the objectives that were not mastered. Why did the students have difficulty identifying the information which supports or refutes a statement in a text? Why did they have difficulty drawing conclusions and deducing? Do they have difficulty in making links between two ideas? Do they take the time to reread the text? Are they able to put a detail into context in order to better understand the message as a whole? What importance is placed in the classroom on the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy: application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation? Is there a link between the weaknesses observed in the students and the pedagogical strategies which are used in the classroom? Are the difficulties experienced by the students due to the lexical or syntactical complexity of the text?

Moreover, this assessment encourages us to return to the intended goal of reading comprehension skills: the development of the ability to read and to understand messages which are conveyed in writing in communication contexts suited to the needs and interests as well as the age of the students. This goal gives rise to a very broad range of learning situations which the students will be called upon to experience. The potential provided by a curriculum based on communication as well as the students' interests is considerable. Such a program involves, among other things, the active participation of the student in the learning process and the opportunity to use a variety of written texts.

In view of the test results, one might ask if the curriculum's potential is being used to the fullest. The survey conducted among the students indicates that they like reading in French somewhat, and that they do not often read outside the classroom. Why? Is it because French is too removed from their everyday lives? Are they exposed to too few French language documents to spark their interest? Are they exposed to a variety of authentic documents such as magazines, newspapers, etc.? Are the documents which are likely to interest them and which are also at their level available in sufficient quantities? Is French a language which is relegated to the classroom only? Is there a link between the students' results and their reading habits outside the classroom? Are the skills they acquire in English transferred when learning the second language?

The intended goal of reading comprehension skills also serves to remind us of the importance of each of the objectives. The objectives of the curriculum are interrelated: they are all aimed at the development of the ability to read. It would not be wise to concentrate all efforts on a single objective to the detriment of another. Nor would it be wise to eliminate an objective from the curriculum under the pretext that the students have already mastered it or that the objective is too difficult to achieve. All the objectives evaluated by the test are valid. They must be considered well before the sixth grade and must, in addition, be pursued at the high school level.

The success of the students with regard to eight of the ten objectives is real. However, we must indicate that this success is not due solely to the learning which was achieved during the sixth grade. The students began developing language skills as soon as they entered the immersion program.

In addition, when we say that the students mastered eight of the ten objectives, we must also add that the objectives were achieved in relation to the texts and questions on the test. The texts used in the test were representative of the type of reading that a grade six student in a French immersion school should be able to understand. We cannot affirm that the objectives would have been achieved if the students had been given texts of a different nature.

These comments are aimed at demonstrating the need to continue to work actively in order to ensure the mastery of all the objectives evaluated by the test.

With regard to the other objectives of the curriculum, we must point out the limits of the assessment. It was impossible to evaluate all the objectives by means of the test. Those which were evaluated, although representative of the curriculum, should not overshadow the importance of the other objectives of the curriculum.

The following recommendations take into account the two objectives which were not mastered and all of the objectives aimed at the development of reading skills.

In order to ensure that a greater number of students are able to identify the information in a text which supports or refutes a statement, **it is recommended that:**

- teachers ensure that the students read with a specific goal in mind;
- teachers put students in situations that require them to go back to the text, to reread it and to make links between the ideas in order to support their point of view;
- teachers encourage discussion among the students and encourage them to support their statements with statistics, references, etc.;
- teachers give students projects which require research;

- teachers put students in situations which call on them to use different mental processes such as identification, selection, grouping, inference and evaluation.[1]

In order to help a greater number of students to draw conclusions and deduce, **it is recommended that:**

- teachers use pedagogical strategies aimed at developing the students' ability to think logically;

- teachers expose their students to activities which give them the opportunity to manipulate the text either by creating a new ending or by changing a part of the text.

In order to improve the students' reading comprehension in relation to all the objectives of the curriculum, **it is recommended that:**

- teachers continue to use a variety of texts (informative, expressive, persuasive, poetic) and that the teachers continue to use original documents (magazines, pamphlets, newspapers, etc.) in order to work on all the curriculum objectives on a regular basis;

- teachers continue to use texts which are of interest to the students and which relate to their personal experiences;

- teachers continue to put into place a variety of activities to develop the students' interest in reading; in particular that teachers read to their students for the sheer pleasure of reading;

- teachers continue to use strategies and varied questions in order to teach students to think: find links between ideas, understand words and sentences in context, draw conclusions, use the information constructively, make judgments, develop ideas, voice opinions, justify responses, in other words, work all levels of Bloom's taxonomy (know, understand, apply, analyze, synthesize, evaluate);

- teachers provide students with various possible approaches to reading: semantic, ideographic, syntactical, morphological, graphophonetical; [2]

In order to support teachers in their efforts, **it is recommended that:**

- the Bureau de l'éducation française continue to provide, either upon request from the school divisions or possibly through Bureau initiative, workshops on the development of reading skills which take into account the weaknesses identified in this assessment;

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[1] See "Les processus mentaux", appendix I of the Programme d'études FRANÇAIS IMMERSION, 5e-6e années, version officielle (Winnipeg: Bureau de l'éducation française, 1989), p. 61.

[2] See "Les entrées en lecture", appendix II of the Programme d'études, FRANÇAIS IMMERSION, 5e-6e années, version officielle (Winnipeg: Bureau de l'éducation française, 1989), p. 63.

- the Bureau de l'éducation française continue to test pedagogical material;

- the Bureau de l'éducation française continue to inform teachers with regard to magazines, novels and other available documents;

- the Bureau de l'éducation française continue to develop resource materials based on the philosophy of the curriculum;

- the Bureau de l'éducation française continue to involve teachers in the development of support material;

- school divisions continue to provide teachers with access to information and training on methods of reading and available documentation;

- school divisions continue to assist teachers with the implementation of reading methods which reflect the philosophy of the curriculum;

- school divisions continue to facilitate access to a rich and varied source of reading material through a variety of concrete actions such as subscribing to magazines which will broaden the students' range of interests, and ensuring that school librairies are well stocked;

- faculties of education continue to ensure that courses which are offered during initial training as well as subsequent upgrading, correspond with the methods of reading recommended in the curriculum;

- faculties of education continue to promote research projects on reading.

WRITING ASSESSMENT

MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT

DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION CONTEXT

The writing skills test placed the students in a context similar to one which they might encounter in a real life situation. The students were asked to read four ads written by children who wanted a pen pal. They were then asked to reply to one of the ads by writing a letter introducing themselves, and describing their family, friends and interests.

During the assessment, the students were to:

1. receive explanations relating to

- the setting of the stage, in order to spark their interest in the subject and trigger the thinking process;
- the writing task which provided the parameters that the students were to respect (their intentions, the referent, the receptor, the context);
- the instructions dealing with the draft, revision, final copy as well as the use of reference materials such as dictionaries and grammar books;
- the duration of the test;

2. write the text by means of

- a draft copy,
- a revision completed using a worksheet which should enable the child to think about the text and improve it;
- a final copy;

3. complete a survey.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT

As in the case of the written comprehension test, a number of steps were included in the development of the writing skills test in order to ensure its validity and accuracy.

Objectives

The test was to measure the extent to which the curriculum objectives with respect to writing skills set out by the Programme d'études, FRANÇAIS IMMERSION, 6e année, document provisoire, 1985, were being met. This curriculum includes a general objective and specific objectives divided into two sections. In the first section, the objectives deal with communication and the different types of messages. The second section deals with the form of the message.

In order to evaluate the objectives, the committee responsible for the development of the test:

- placed the students in a communication context similar to that which they might encounter in a real life situation;
- chose circumstances for the writing task which enabled the students to use more than one type of message;
- developed criteria which take into account the factors affecting communication and the form of the message.

Development of evaluation context

The committee developed an evaluation context which included: an introduction, a writing assignment, instructions and a student worksheet developed on the basis of the evaluation criteria.

Pilot testing

In the spring of 1987, the test was validated in five immersion schools.

Reliability

The reliability of the writing skills test was calculated using the Diederich formula[1], which produced a coefficient of 0.79. The test therefore seems to have a high level of reliability.

CORRECTION

CRITERIA

An analytical scale containing ten criteria was used to evaluate the students' texts.

For each criterion, four qualitative descriptors relating to student performance were established and a value was attached to each. The possible total was 100.

By assigning a value to each of the four descriptors, it was possible to calculate the students' average performance for each of the criteria, as well as for the test as a whole (see test results, page 17).

In addition, the percentage of students achieving the level of quality for each descriptor was established. This distribution of students based on the descriptors of the analytical scale made it possible for the committee to get a clearer idea of the students' writing abilities (see test results, page 17).

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[1] The Diederich formula is a modification of Kuder-Richardson's formula 21. Dominique Morisette, La mesure et l'évaluation en enseignement, p. 61.

WRITING ASSESSMENT - Grade 6 - French as a second language

ANALYTICAL SCALE

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION AND EXPLANATIONS	DESCRIPTORS A	B	C	D	MARK
Choice of information	1. The student's letter includes the necessary information with respect to his/her physical description, age, family, friends, interests, and hobbies. The student has also asked his/her correspondent three questions, and invited him/her to answer the letter.	More than adequate relevant information included (text more specific, more descriptive, more elaborate). [24]	Adequate relevant information (text includes all the information requested in the instructions). [18]	Insufficient relevant information or inclusion of some irrelevant information. [12]	Clearly insufficient relevant information or inclusion of considerable amount of irrelevant information. [6]	/24
Choice of vocabulary	2. Vocabulary is precise and varied.	Vocabulary is precise, varied, and includes nuances; well adapted to writing project; very few errors. [12]	Overall, vocabulary is precise: very little misinterpretation or ambiguity; few unnecessary repetitions; very few anglicisms. [9]	Vocabulary is imprecise or inappropriate: generally poor; some unnecessary repetition; some anglicisms. [6]	Vocabulary is imprecise and inappropriate: generally poor; a lot of unnecessary repetition; considerable number of anglicisms. [3]	/12
Textual coherence	3. The text is coherent. More specifically: a) the information is logically grouped; b) connecting words are used appropriately both within and between sentences; c) pronouns and indicators of time and place are identifiable, that is to say that the text includes the information required by the reader to determine who and what is being written about.	Information grouped logically; good use of connecting words; referents always identifiable. [16]	Very little of the information is scattered; very few connecting words are used inappropriately; referents almost always identifiable. [12]	Some information scattered; some connecting words inappropriately used; some referents difficult to identify. [8]	Considerable amount of information scattered; a number of connecting words inappropriately used; a number of referents difficult to identify. [4]	/16

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION AND EXPLANATIONS	DESCRIPTORS A	B	C	D	MARK
Sentence structure	4. Simple, compound, and complex sentences are well constructed: - all words are included and properly placed; - no oral structures; - French sentence structure.	All sentences are well constructed. 12	Almost all sentences are well-constructed; some literal translation; few structures used in speech. 9	A number of sentences present problems; a number of literal translations; a number of structures used in speech. 6	The majority of sentences present problems; a considerable amount of literal translations; many structures used in speech. 3	/12
Punctuation	5. The following punctuation marks are used adequately: periods, commas, capitals, and question marks.	Always 0-1 errors 8	Almost always 2-3 errors 6	Often 4-6 errors 4	Rarely 7 or more errors 2	/8
Spelling	6. Words representing a level of difficulty appropriate for grade six immersion students and words studied in class are spelled correctly. NOTE: If in doubt, consult spelling list (2-6) suggested in curriculum.	Always 0-2 errors 8	Almost always 3-5 errors 6	Often 6-8 errors 4	Rarely 9 or more errors 2	/8
Agreements	7. Agreements in gender and number are correctly made (only agreements included in curriculum). /adj./noun	Always 0-2 errors 4	Almost always 3-5 errors 3	Often 6-8 errors 2	Rarely 9 or more errors 1	/4
Gender of Nouns	8. The gender of nouns is correctly indicated.	Always 0-2 errors 4	Almost always 3-5 errors 3	Often 6-8 errors 2	Rarely 9 or more errors 1	/4

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION AND EXPLANATIONS	DESCRIPTORS A	B	C	D	MARK
Conjugation and Agreement of Verbs	9. Verb endings are correctly applied (only verbs included in curriculum).	Always 0-2 errors 8	Almost always 3-5 errors 6	Often 6-8 errors 4	Rarely 9 or more errors 2	/8
Homophones	10. Homophones are used correctly.	Always 0-1 errors 4	Almost always 2-3 errors 3	Often 4-6 errors 2	Rarely 7 or more errors 1	/4

RESULTS OF WRITING SKILLS TEST

This section includes:

- the provincial results;
- the interpretation of results for each criterion:
  - . the procedure followed to interpret the results,
  - . the synthesis of the interpretation of results.

In all cases, the results are group results for all students in immersion schools; 1160 students participated in the writing skills test.

PROVINCIAL RESULTS

The table on the following page provides the results obtained by the students who participated in the assessment. The first half of the table (left side) indicates the average performance of the students for each of the criteria. The second half of the table (right side) provides the students' percentile distribution based on the descriptors of the analytical scale.

Provincial Results of Writing Assessment

Item Number	CRITERIA	Average performance per criterion (N = 1160) POINTS GIVEN FOR EACH CRITERION	MEAN RAW SCORE	PERCENT	Students' percentile distribution based on the descriptors of the analytical scale. A	B	C	D	NR*
	TEST TOTAL	100	74.08	74.08					
101	I. Choice of information	24	15.55	64.78	7.1	53.2	27.6	9.7	2.4
102	II. Choice of vocabulary	12	9.00	74.98	9.1	80.2	8.3	0.4	2.0
103	III. Textual coherence	16	12.67	79.16	32.3	50.8	13.8	1.1	2.0
104	IV. Sentence structure	12	7.60	63.30	1.3	53.7	39.0	4.0	2.0
105	V. Punctuation	8	6.69	83.58	53.7	27.4	13.5	3.3	2.0
106	VI. Spelling	8	5.53	69.09	27.8	35.2	19.1	15.9	2.1
107	VII. Agreements (adj/noun)	4	3.25	81.14	42.2	40.7	11.9	3.1	2.0
108	VIII. Gender of Nouns	4	3.62	90.54	65.3	28.7	3.4	0.5	2.0
109	IX. Verb Conjugation and Agreement	8	6.65	83.15	46.5	38.6	11.2	1.7	2.0
110	X. Homophones	4	3.51	87.79	63.2	23.4	9.8	1.6	2.0

* NR: No response, that is to say, the students who did not participate in the writing assessment and those who submitted copies which were impossible to correct based on the established criteria.

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

PROCEDURE FOLLOWED TO INTERPRET RESULTS

The committee indicated its expectations for each of the ten criteria:

ACCEPTABLE level of performance: The committee determined the minimum percentage of students in the province who would have to achieve quality levels A and B in order to consider the results satisfactory. If the percentage of students who succeeded was below the minimum level, the results would be considered unsatisfactory.

DESIRABLE level of performance: The committee determined the percentage of students which it hoped would achieve quality levels A and B. In other words, it aimed for the ideal. According to the committee, the results would be considered excellent if they achieved or surpassed this level.

After having identified its expectations, the committee compared them with the actual results. The committee then used the interpretation scale below to determine its degree of satisfaction with the results.

SYNTHESIS OF THE INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

THE SCALE USED TO INTERPRET RESULTS		CRITERIA
5 EXCELLENT COMMAND	The actual results are at or above the DESIRABLE level. The committee is very satisfied.	. Vocabulary . Gender of Nouns
4 VERY GOOD COMMAND	The actual results are slightly above the acceptable level, but below desirable level. The committee is satisfied.	. Textual coherence . Agreements . Conjugation and Agreement of Verbs
3 GOOD COMMAND	The actual results are ACCEPTABLE. The committee is satisfied.	. Punctuation . Homophones
2 FAIR COMMAND	The actual results are slightly below the acceptable level, although not entirely unacceptable. The committee is not satisfied.	. Spelling
1 INSUFFICIENT COMMAND	The actual results are far below the acceptable level. The committee is not satisfied.	. Choice of information . Sentence structure

Recommendations made on the basis of the interpretation of results can be found at the end of the chapter dealing with writing skills.

RESULTS OF SURVEY COMPLETED BY STUDENTS FOLLOWING THE WRITING SKILLS TEST

The data from the survey completed by the students indicated that the majority of the students:

- found the test easy;
- consulted a dictionary, posters and conjugation tables at least once or twice (almost 40% of the students consulted the reference materials fairly often);
- speak English at home;
- to a certain extent like writing in French;
- think it is easy to write in French;
- wrote French texts at least once every two weeks during the 1987-88 school year.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As in the case of the reading assessment, the writing assessment included two components: the test, which measured the extent to which objectives of the curriculum are being met, and the survey, which provided information regarding the students.

The test results were studied by a data interpretation committee. The procedure followed to interpret the results of the writing skills test was similar to the one used in the case of the reading assessment. However, the "acceptable" and "desirable" performances were not compared with the average performance of the students but rather with the total percentage of students who had achieved levels A and B of the descriptors.

In fact, the use of descriptors is one of the strenghts of this evaluation. For each of the evaluated criteria, four levels of performance were established: A, B, C and D. All students who achieved level A or B of a criterion were said to have mastered this criterion.

The use of the descriptors during the correction process enabled the committee to obtain a good picture of the students' abilities.

Once the results were studied, the committee determined their degree of satisfaction with each of the criteria. They concluded that the students:

- use precise vocabulary;
- indicate the gender of nouns correctly.

In addition, an acceptable number of students:

- organize the ideas in their texts coherently;
- make gender and number agreements correctly;
- write verb endings correctly;

- use adequate punctuation;
- use homophones adequately.

However, not enough students were able to:

- make a judicious choice of information;
- write correctly words that present a level of difficulty appropriate to grade six immersion students;
- construct simple and complex sentences correctly.

A number of grade six students seem to have specific learning requirements which must be addressed in order to improve their writing skills. However, in general, **the students have a good command of the objectives evaluated by the writing assessment.**

We would like to emphasize that the conclusions are valid solely with respect to the writing assessment given to the students during the test. This test verified the extent to which the objectives had been met in a single set of circumstances. It is quite possible that the students' results might have been different had the writing assignment been different. However, this test sheds some light on the students' ability to write a letter to a pen pal in order to introduce themselves.

The weaknesses that were noted in the writing assessment raise some questions. Why do the students have difficulty with spelling, sentence structure and especially in selecting information? What pedagogical strategies might help solve the observed problems? Was emphasis placed on knowledge rather than know-how in learning situations? What is the importance given to the circumstances of the communication when students write? To what degree are they motivated to write?

The questions raised by the assessment obviously center on the goals and major principles of the curriculum. If it is important that students master an objective such as using precise vocabulary, it is even more important that they do so within a context to which they can relate and which addresses a need.

It is interesting to note the information gathered from the survey completed by the students following the test. This survey suggests that the students perceive themselves as being competent: the majority of students found the test easy and find it easy to write in French. It is true that they have a good command of seven of the ten criteria. Their perception of their writing abilities is therefore supported by the test results. However, we wonder about the students' feelings regarding their ability to make a judicious choice of information, to spell correctly and to structure their sentences properly. Do they think that their abilities are adequate? And, if so, does this explain, in part at least, why the errors are entrenched? Do the students feel the need to improve?

Another point which should not be overlooked is how often the students actually write: 22.17% of students write texts in French at least once a week, 32.36% of students write in French once every two weeks, and 24.50%

write once a month. Can writing skills be adequately developed if the students are not often given the opportunity to practice the skills they must acquire?

The following recommendations take into account the test results, the curriculum's philosophy and the information obtained from the student survey. Given the students' weakness in choosing information, **it is recommended that:**

- teachers set the stage at the beginning of the writing process so that students write with the purpose of communicating and use different types of messages from one time to another;
- teachers encourage students to review what they have written;
- teachers continue to encourage students to use evaluation worksheets.

In order for students to improve their spelling, **it is recommended that:**

- teachers encourage students to reread their texts, to question their spelling and to check it in the appropriate reference books;
- teachers give students many opportunities to use the knowledge and skills they acquire;
- teachers develop strategies which help students understand and use reference works;
- teachers create with their classes lists of frequently used words or lists developed from a theme or subject; these words could be recorded in a scribbler which could be consulted when necessary.

In order for a greater number of students to be able to construct their sentences properly, **it is recommended that:**

- teachers not accept to be the interpreters of what students have written, but rather encourage them to clarify their messages;
- teachers must themselves be language models and must ensure that students come into contact with other models as well;
- teachers promote positive interaction between listening, speaking, reading and writing; for example, teachers read to the students frequently and have them read often in order to expose them to correct and varied structures;
- teachers work on sentence structures regularly (e.g. daily messages at the board, language exercises).

In order for students to improve their writing skills with respect to all the criteria included in the analytical scale, **it is recommended that:**

- teachers continue to pay particular attention to the learning situations of the students;

- teachers have the opportunity to meet with each other in order to discuss pedagogical strategies which should be implemented to help the students; in particular, that the writing process be discussed:

. **pre-writing** :	. intention, . receptor, . choice of information: - vocabulary, - ideas;
. **writing** :	. first draft . revision with respect to: - formulation of the information, - organization of ideas, - choice of vocabulary, . correction (written code): - spelling, - grammar, - verb conjugation, - penmanship;
. **post-writing** :	. publication or distribution;

- teachers ensure that students are given many opportunities to use the knowledge and skills acquired since the development of writing skills occurs when the process is repeated;

- teachers ensure that students are involved in the writing process on a daily basis;

- teachers ensure that the writing process is integrated to a greater extent with the other subjects and activities of the class;

- teachers continue to use the writing process in accordance with the pedagogical process proposed in the curriculum and that they recognize that within such a process there is a place for grammar;

- teachers encourage students to use reference works.

In order to support teachers in their efforts, **it is recommended that**:

- the Bureau de l'éducation française continue to offer workshops on the writing process in French as a second language, in response to requests from the school divisions and/or possible initiatives of the Bureau;

- the Bureau de l'éducation française continue to inform teachers of available teaching materials;

- the Bureau de l'éducation française develop resource materials in accordance with the language philosophy proposed in the curriculum and aimed at developing writing skills;

- the Bureau de l'éducation française continue to involve teachers in the development of material aimed at developing writing skills;

- school divisions continue to promote exchanges among teachers and that this be done on a regular basis;

- school divisions continue to assist teachers in implementing the writing process in accordance with the pedagogical process proposed in the curriculum;

- faculties of education continue to ensure that the courses which are offered during initial training as well as subsequent upgrading correspond with the writing process recommended in the curriculum;

- faculties of education continue to promote research projects on writing skills.

TEACHER SURVEY

This survey was sent to all grade six French teachers at immersion schools; 41 surveys were returned, which represents a response rate of 73%. The teachers who chose to complete the survey did not necessarily answer all questions. The number of teachers who answered is indicated following each question (R: N/41). All percentages indicated were calculated on the basis of the total number of surveys returned: 41.

N.B.: The number of respondents is indicated as follows for each question: R: n/41.

1. Do you use the curriculum as the basis from which to teach French? (R: 41/41)

85.4% of teachers use it either often or always.

2. How many inservice days have you had to be informed and trained with respect to the curriculum since 1985? (R: 40/41)

22.0% had 5 days or more, 14.6% had 3 days, 48.7% had ½ - 2 days, 12.2% did not have a single day, and 2.4% did not indicate.

3. Indicate in order of priority the professional training activities which have served to train you or inform you about the curriculum. (R: 30/41)

Despite the high number of respondents who did not answer this question, each of the activities (work on BEF curriculum committee, implementation sessions organized by BEF, support sessions at the local or regional level, testing of pedagogical material) seems to be valid.

4. Indicate the percentage (approximate) of time allocated in class to each of the components of the curriculum. (R: 38/41)

More time seems to be given to reading and writing skills than to oral skills.

5. Indicate in order of difficulty, the components of the curriculum (listening, reading, speaking, writing) which are more difficult and those which are easier to teach. (R: 39/41)

Writing skills are perceived as being more difficult to teach.

6. Indicate in order of difficulty, the components of the curriculum (listening, reading, speaking, writing) which are more difficult and those which are easier to evaluate. (R: 39/41)

Listening and speaking skills are perceived as being more difficult to evaluate.

7. Do you feel that you have received sufficient pedagogical training to teach grade 6 French on the basis of the curriculum? If so, answer questions no. 8-12; if not, answer only question 13. (R: 38/41)

65.9% answered yes. The remainder answered no or did not respond.

8. Indicate in order of difficulty the type of message which is most difficult to work with in achieving the objectives of the curriculum. (R:25/41)

The poetic type of message seems to pose the most problems.

9. Are the parents of the students you teach aware of the orientation proposed in the French as a second language curriculum? (R: 25/41)

The answers of those respondents who felt that they had received sufficient pedagogical training seem to indicate that the parents are aware of the orientation proposed in the French as a second language curriculum.

10. Do/Would the parents who are aware of the orientation of the French curriculum simplify the teaching of French in your class? (R: 25/41)

The answers of those respondents who felt that they had received sufficient pedagogical training seem to indicate that parents who are aware of the orientation of the curriculum would/does simplify the instruction of French in their class.

11. Are you satisfied with the curriculum for grade six French? (R: 26/41)

The majority of those respondents who felt that they had received sufficient pedagogical training seem satisfied with the curriculum.

12. Identify two ways of improving the instruction of French within the scope of the curriculum:

Comments made by teachers:

- I would like to see more activities and ideas in the curriculum.
- Television or taped programs which would interest the students.
- More books produced locally and at the students' level.
- Training on the evaluation of daily work.
- Provide a list of good references and resources for immersion.
- Have books that are more interesting and better suited to the reading level of the students.
- Have concrete exercises to improve oral skills (much work is needed in this area).
- Produce texts for social sciences and science which are easy to read.
- Have more information and support sessions.
- Exchange ideas with teachers from different schools.
- Have teaching material ready for use in the classroom (the material that was developed for the novel is excellent).
- Have examples of letters.
- Continue to offer sessions.
- Have cultural activities, skits or plays.
- Have a list of novels recommended for individual reading.
- Have recordings to provide good examples to develop the ear.
- Have a better list of words for spelling.
- Have more stories which interest grade six students. Those we have are much too short.
- Make the curriculum more concrete.
- Provide suggestions on how to teach grammar.
- Include in the curriculum suggestions on how to adapt for "weak" and "strong" classes.
- Have support groups for teachers who are alone at their school (there is only one grade 5 or 6 teacher at the school).
- Provide assistance for teachers who teach in combined classes.
- Provide practical ideas - how to encourage students to talk to each other in French.
- Organize activities which place value on knowing French.
- Include in the curriculum, specific activities which enable the students to see the utility and the benefits of the French language.

13. If you feel that you have not received enough professional training to teach grade 6 French on the basis of the curriculum, how would you like to be informed? (R:13/41)

Teachers would like to be informed through:

- implementation sessions organized by BEF;
- support sessions for programs organized at the local or regional level;
- testing of pedagogical material.

CONCLUSION OF REPORT

In the first chapter of this Summary Report, we set out the goals of the French Immersion Reading and Writing Assessment of French as a Second Language. Were the goals achieved? In the following pages, **these goals** are reviewed and commented upon.

Provide the Department of Education and Training, the public, and educators, with information on the extent to which the objectives of the FRANÇAIS IMMERSION, 6e année, document provisoire, 1985, curriculum have been met.

The analysis and interpretation of the students' results have enabled us to conclude that, in general:

- grade six students have a good command of the objectives evaluated by means of the reading assessment;

- grade six students have a good command of the objectives evaluated by means of the writing assessment.

We were able to gain insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the students, enabling us to make certain recommendations. These encourage the Bureau de l'éducation française, school divisions, teachers and faculties of education to work together in order to help the students develop their reading and writing skills in authentic and significant communication contexts.

In particular, with respect to reading comprehension, the students will have to be placed in situations which will help them develop critical thinking skills and be able to support a statement by returning to the text. With respect to their written skills, particular attention will have to be given to the choice of information, spelling and sentence structure.

Gather data which will help improve the curriculum.

The reading and writing assessment enabled us to collect data by using tests and surveys.

The data gathered from the tests and surveys completed by the students helped us better understand the strengths and weaknesses of students, and better identify their needs, enabling us to make certain recommendations. The data was made available to the curriculum consultant responsible for the development of the 1989 curriculum. We would like to add that the results of the tests and surveys are only one of many sources of information which helped to improve the curriculum. In particular, the work completed by the curriculum development committee was the cornerstone in the development of a strong curriculum, similar in its official version to the 1985 draft version used during the development of the tests. In fact, if there is a difference between

the new and old versions, it is that the current curriculum takes into account new pedagogical methods which reflect the whole language approach.[1] Thus, the 1989 curriculum deems important the mastering of objectives aimed at the integrated acquisition and development of language skills in authentic and significant communication situations. The recommendations made in this report support the same goals and objectives as those clearly expressed in the 1989 curriculum.

While the tests and surveys done by the students provided useful information, the same is true for the survey completed by teachers. This survey did not only deal with the written component but also the oral component of the curriculum. In addition, the survey was also intended to identify some of the teachers' needs.

The survey data indicates that the majority of teachers who responded to the survey use the curriculum often. In addition, 65.9% of teachers indicated that they had received sufficient pedagogical training to teach the program on the basis of the curriculum. In this group, the vast majority of teachers indicated that they were satisfied with the curriculum . We can therefore assume that they are also satisfied with the new 1989 version.

However, the majority of teachers were not given very many days to be informed or trained with respect to the curriculum: 60.9% of teachers had two days or less of professional development. Approximately half of this group is made up of teachers who indicated that they had not received sufficient pedagogical training. The other half of this group is made up of teachers who indicated that they had received sufficient pedagogical training to teach French on the basis of the curriculum. These figures were surprising. Although one or two days are useful to initiate teachers to the orientation of the curriculum, we question whether two days are sufficient to enable teachers to make full use of the curriculum's potential.

Teachers are aware of the problem. Even those who accept and use the curriculum pointed out some difficulties: the instruction of the poetic type of message, the instruction of writing skills and oral evaluation. The teachers also made numerous suggestions on how to improve the instruction of French. A number of comments support the recommendations found at the end of the chapters dealing with reading comprehension and writing skills and demonstrate the teachers' interest in the quality of oral and written language. The comments also included a number of requests for additional assistance, either through resource materials or professional development activities. In particular, exchanges among teachers are perceived as professional development activities which help improve the instruction of French.

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[1] The difference between the old and new version is explained in the introduction of the Programme d'études FRANÇAIS IMMERSION, 5e-6e années, version officielle (Winnipeg: Bureau de l'éducation française, 1989), p. 1.

In order to assist teachers, school divisions must continue to promote access to training, and the Bureau de l'éducation français must continue to provide pedagogical upgrading sessions and ensure the development and testing of resource materials.

Promote or sustain an interest in a quality language of communication among students, parents, educators and school administrators.

Written French is important to the people listed above. As evidence of this fact, we mention the organization of events such as "les Rats de Bibliothèque" and conferences which promote the development of writing skills, as well as the many efforts made by teachers at the local level: school papers, published collections of texts written by students, reading periods, correspondence with other students, etc.

In addition, as already mentioned, teachers have provided suggestions which demonstrate their willingness to work on developing a quality language of communication. We believe, therefore, that the provincial assessment served to sustain an interest which was already very strong.

Help teachers improve their student evaluation skills.

A number of teachers were members of the Technical Committee and indicated that this experience had been beneficial to them.

As well, all grade six French teachers administered the reading assessment and writing assessment themselves. They were, therefore, in contact with examples of measurement instruments developed to collect information on the extent to which the curriculum objectives are met. These tools are now available to them.

Inform school divisions, upon request, of the extent to which the curriculum objectives have been met in their schools.

The school divisions who made requests to this effect, received the students' results. It is still possible to request the results from the person responsible for this project at the Bureau de l'éducation française.

These observations lead us to conclude that the goals have been met or are in the process of being met. However, we feel it is important to point out the limitations of the assessment. Reading and writing are complex means of communication. No single test or survey could provide all the necessary information concerning the students' ability to read and write.

The Technical Committee therefore makes the **following recommendation:**

- that the Bureau de l'éducation française continue to evaluate the FRANÇAIS IMMERSION curriculum and that these evaluations continue to involve French teachers.

With respect to the immediate future, we encourage the regular use of the present curriculum which is an excellent guide for educators who work at developing French language skills in Manitoba's Immersion program.

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The following bibliography contains all the works quoted in this Summary Report as well as a selection of other titles which were found to be particularly useful.

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